

## REMARKS

Claims 1-29 are now pending in this application. Claims 20-23 have been amended and new claims 28 and 29 added. Applicants note, with appreciation, the allowance of claims 1-19 and 24-27.

Changes have been made to incorporate the objections made by the Examiner to the drawings. Applicants note that reference numeral 21C in Fig. 3 is mentioned at page 17, line 16. Typographical errors in the specification have also been corrected.

Claims 20-23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being taught in U.S. Patent No. 4,475,223 to Taniguchi et al.

In what is claimed in the amended claims 20-23 and the added claims 28-29, the evacuation portion is disposed on the table at an outer region of the supporting portion, which supports the sample. Gas at the opposite side from the supported side of the sample (with reference to the sample, a face of the sample opposite to the supporting portion) is evacuated through a pipe that communicates with the evacuation portion.

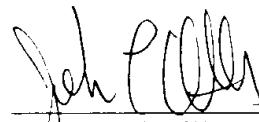
Figs. 4, 5, 6a and 6b of Taniguchi et al. disclose the wafer (sample) 11 sucked and held by a wafer deforming chuck 22 provided on the wafer feed or movement stage 25. However, contrary what is claimed in claims 20-23 and 28-29, an evacuating portion including piping 37 is provided beneath the wafer 11 and only the gas beneath the wafer 11 is evacuated. This is completely different from what is now claimed in these claims.

In view of the above noted differences, Applicants believe that all claims in this application are in condition for allowance, prompt notice of which is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at (202) 220-4200 to discuss any information concerning this application.

The Office is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or § 1.17 or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,



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John C. Altmiller  
Registration No. 25,951

Date: August 11, 2003

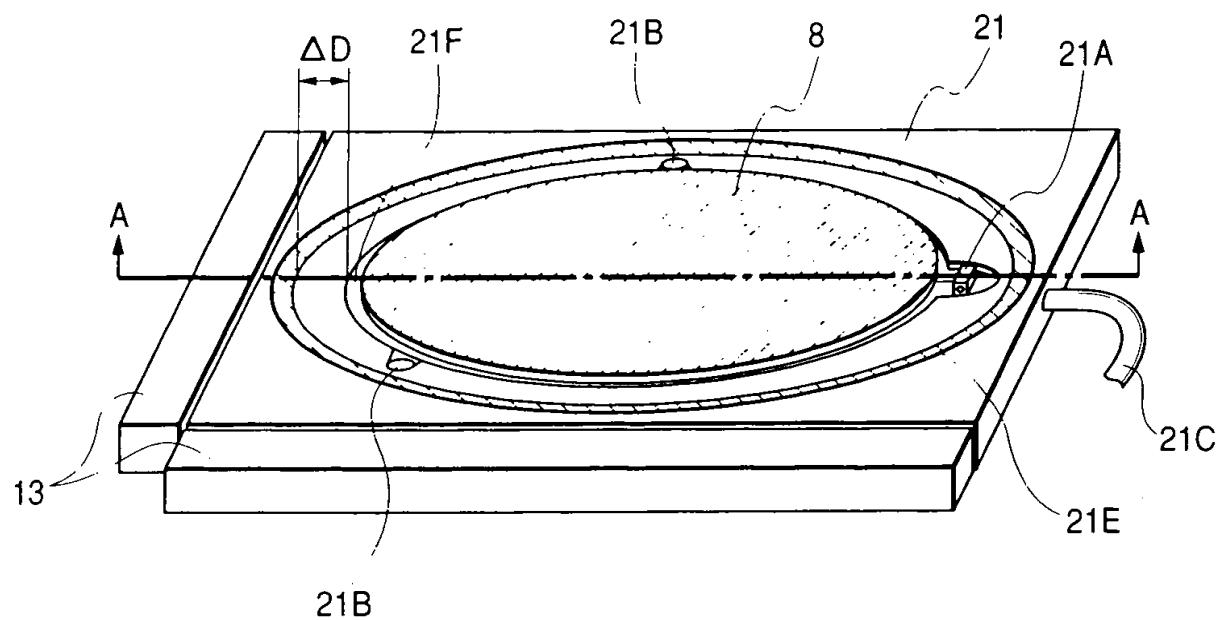
KENYON & KENYON  
1500 K Street, N.W., Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
Tel.: (202) 220-4200  
Fax.: (202) 220-4201  
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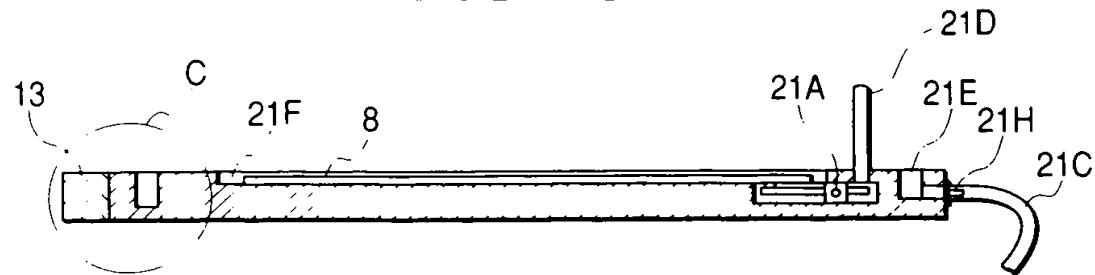
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*FIG. 2*



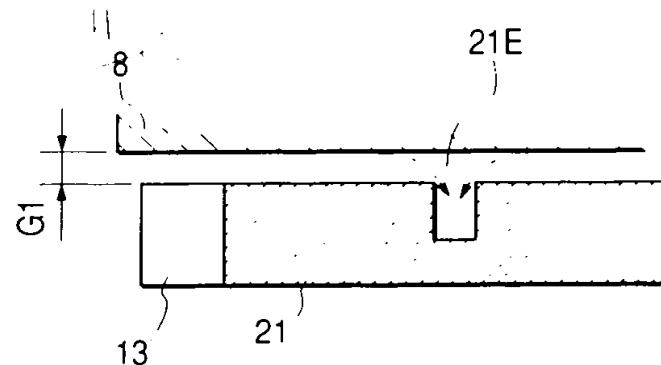
*FIG. 3*



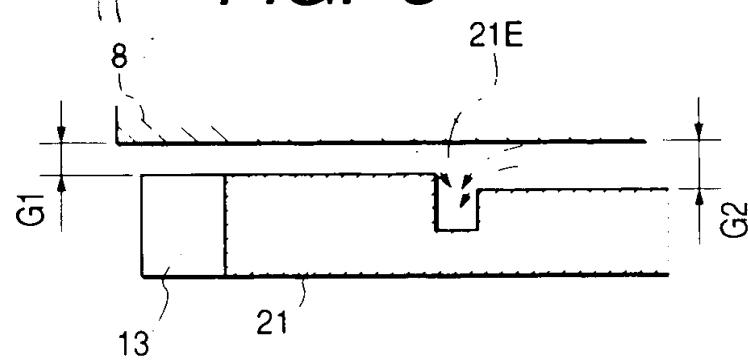


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*FIG. 4*



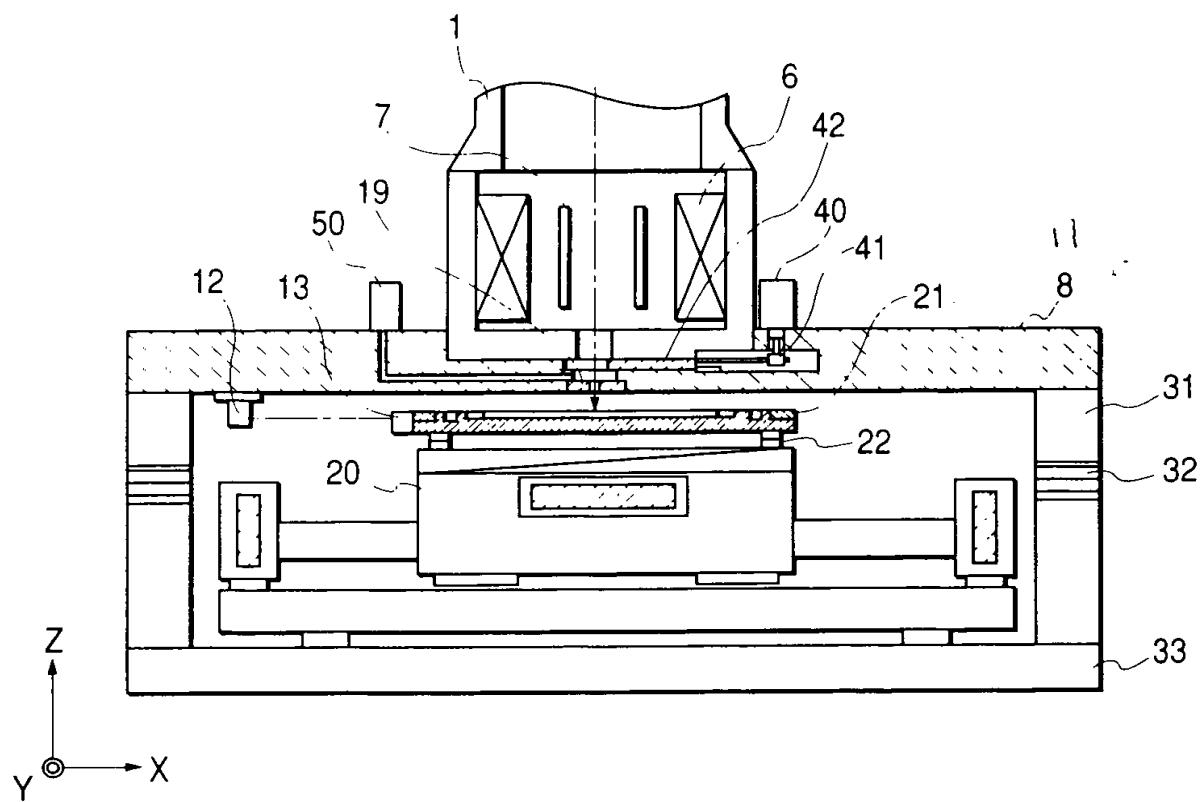
*FIG. 5*





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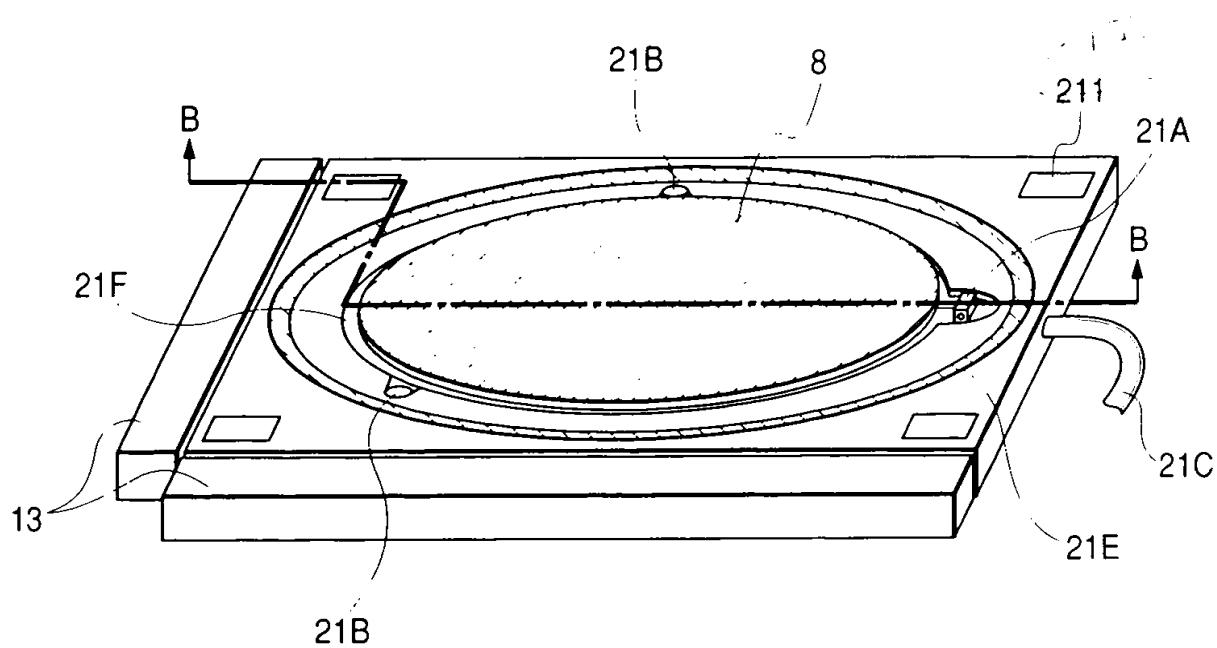
*FIG. 6*



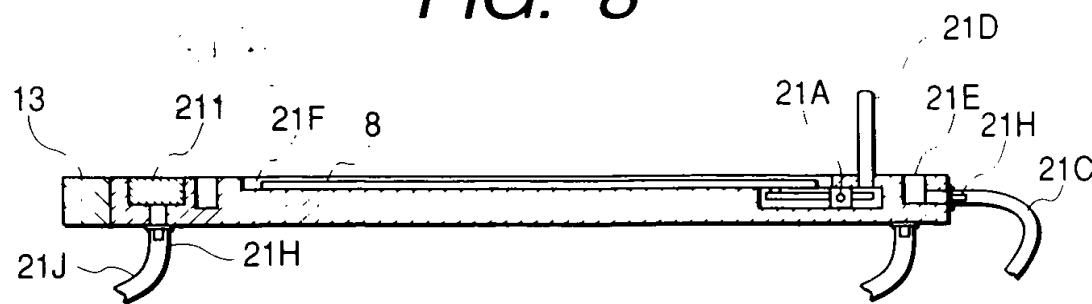


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*FIG. 7*



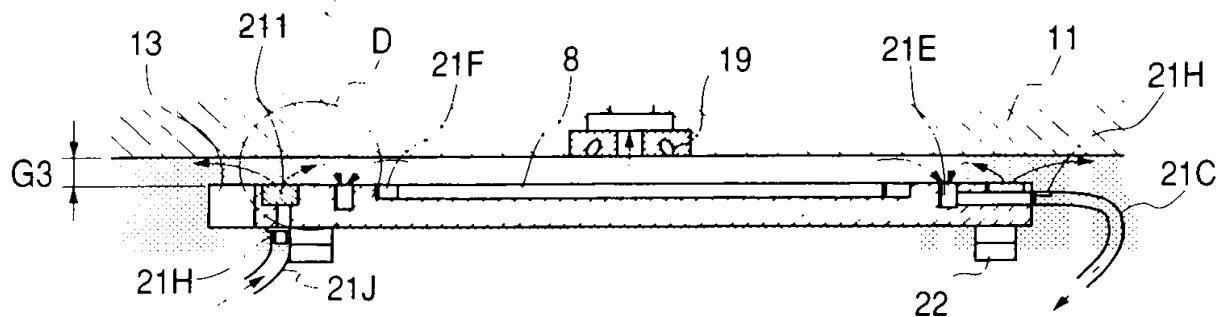
*FIG. 8*



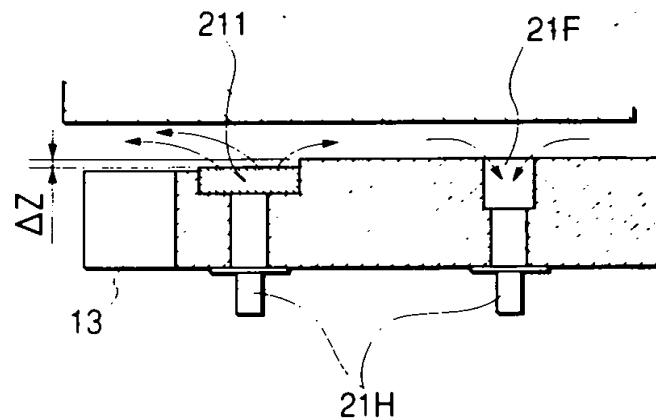


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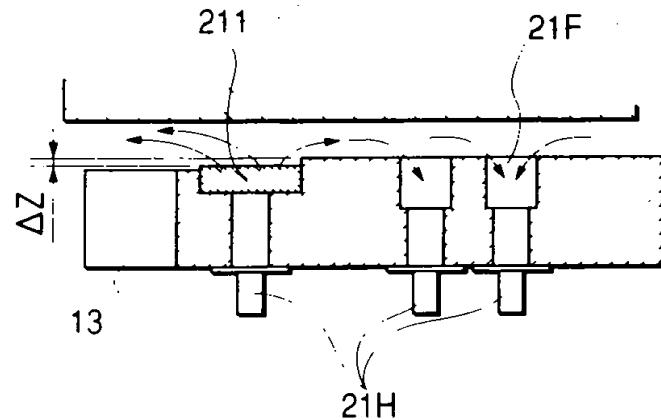
**FIG. 9**



**FIG. 10**



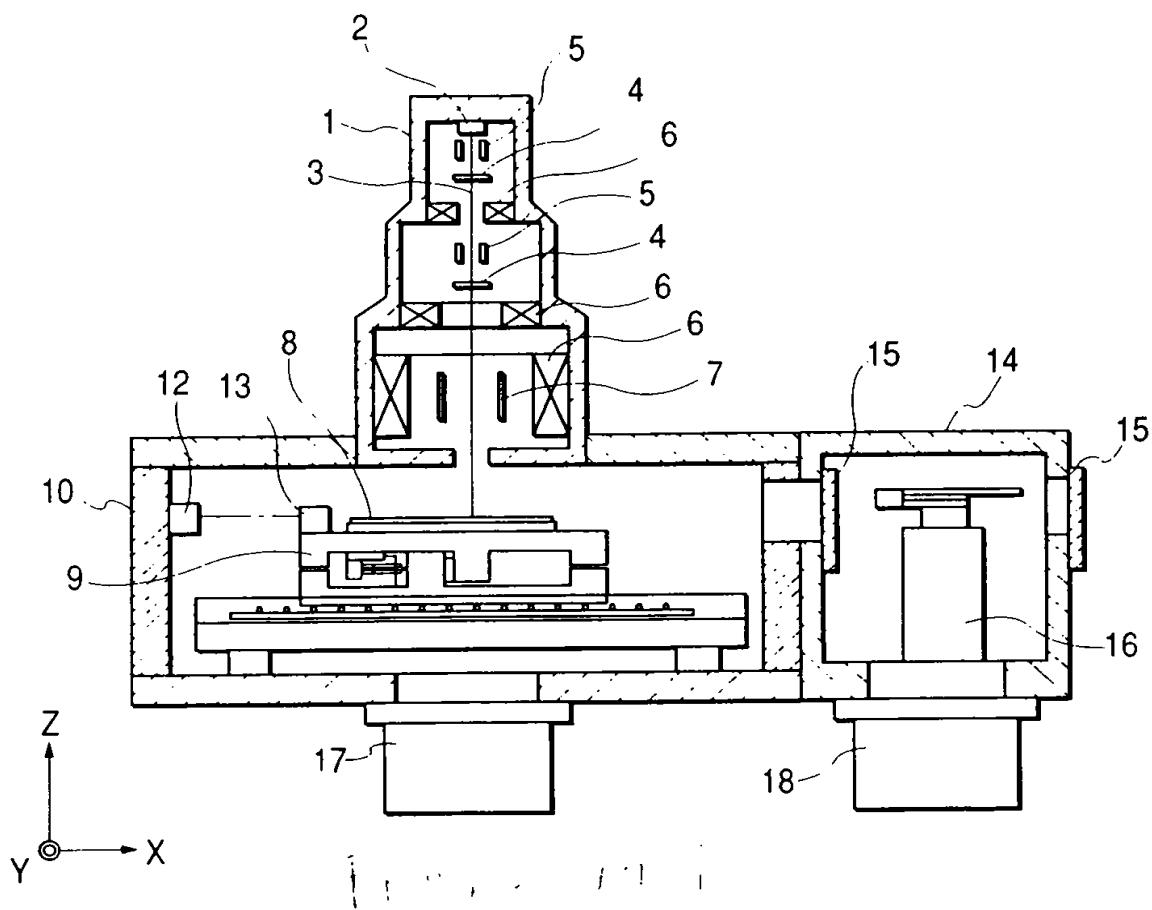
**FIG. 11**





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**FIG. 12**



**FIG. 13**

